

Maine Coastline

News from the Maine Coastal Program

Winter 2003



Nature-based Tourism:

The Quest for Sustainability

Since the arrival of the first rusticators more than a century ago, Maine's beautiful scenery and traditional culture have consistently lured visitors from "away." Tourism now ranks as one of the state's leading economic sectors, particularly along the coast where—by one estimate—70 percent of tourism expenditures occur. Much of the coastal tourist trade is "nature-based" in that visitors come to enjoy outdoor recreation (such as hiking, sea kayaking or sailing) and to sample arts and culture grounded in the region's rich natural resources. "Nature-based tourism holds great potential to provide us with the best of both worlds," reflects Coastal Program Director Kathleen Leyden. "It can strengthen local economies while protecting and even enhancing the health of natural ecosystems. To realize these benefits, though, it needs to be done sustainably."

The dialogue over what constitutes sustainable nature-based tourism is just beginning in Maine: to date, neither government nor industry has clearly defined this term or spelled out its implications. In the past, says Maine Sea Grant Extension Associate Natalie Springuel, nature-based tourism often was reduced to a simple equation: "we've got nature: let's bring tourists." Now business owners and communities engaged in outdoor recreation, ecotourism, adventure travel, and cultural activities are realizing the need to guide tourism in ways that will support long-term economic vitality and ecological health. "We're witnessing many related concerns—from sprawl, to escalating property taxes, to increasing pollution—that are bringing this issue to a head," observes Nat Bowditch, Assistant Director at Maine's Office of Tourism. "It's becoming clear that the environment, and how we steward it, needs to be addressed."



Headwaters/Maine State Planning Office



Headwaters/Maine State Planning Office

As Maine works to enhance tourism's economic benefits while limiting its potential environmental costs, it may glean valuable lessons from other popular tourist destinations around the globe. The Maine Coastal Program recently provided funds for several government and industry delegates to attend the World Ecotourism Summit in Quebec which drew participants from nearly 100 nations. Nat Bowditch came back from the Summit inspired by the stories he heard: "we'd like to model our efforts in Maine after the best of the best," he says. "The most successful programs in sustainable tourism around the world have gotten potential beneficiaries—municipalities, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, trade associations, individual businesses, and legislators—involved from the outset in creating partnerships that support their mutual interests. We're still at the starting gate with this process in Maine so now is the time for people to get involved."

Those who would like to join in this opening dialogue are invited to attend the Governor's Conference on Tourism (to be held Wednesday February 12, 2003, at the Augusta Civic Center). The morning sessions will focus on sustainable tourism in Maine and how the state and industry might guide creation of new standards and policies. Those could take the form of voluntary guidelines that help individual businesses or whole sectors of the industry to adopt more sustainable practices (such as purchasing supplies locally or reducing waste and pollution). A pilot project underway in Maine, involving outfitters who use Maine's public islands for their sea kayaking operations, has already demon

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Director's Column

December 2002

In this special edition of *Maine Coastline*, the Coastal Program is celebrating and promoting the International Year of Ecotourism. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed this theme for 2002 and organized a World Summit last summer to focus attention on how balanced and responsible tourism can sustain the well-being of local people and environments around the globe.

The challenges of sustainable tourism reflect those inherent in the Coastal Program's central mission—to "balance conservation and development of the Maine coast." What is required to strike this critical balance? We need spirited dialogue among those who care about our region and its future; careful municipal and regional planning; and new means to encourage and reward sustainable business practices.

In an effort to foster a healthy balance between economic growth and ecological well-being, the Maine Coastal Program is working to advance the understanding and practice of sustainable tourism. We're meeting with tourism representatives, business owners and government staff to forge new approaches to tourism planning. We've helped to support innovative pilot projects like the Maine Arts and Heritage Tourism Partnership, and enabled Maine delegates to gather valuable lessons at the World Ecotourism Summit.

As the International Year of Ecotourism draws to a close, I encourage you to assess your own practices when you travel—whether in Maine or beyond its borders. In what ways could you contribute to the places you visit and minimize any negative impact? You may want to learn more about the "Leave No Trace Ethic" (see page 4) or follow guidance in the new Watersheds Pledge Book (see page 7). Hearing more about the sustainable practices of pioneering businesses (see the newsletter's center spread) may inspire you to support such operations or adopt similar measures in your own business. By working together, we can embrace sustainable practices that will enhance the experience of visitors and improve our own quality of life.

Kathleen Leyden
Maine Coastal Program Director

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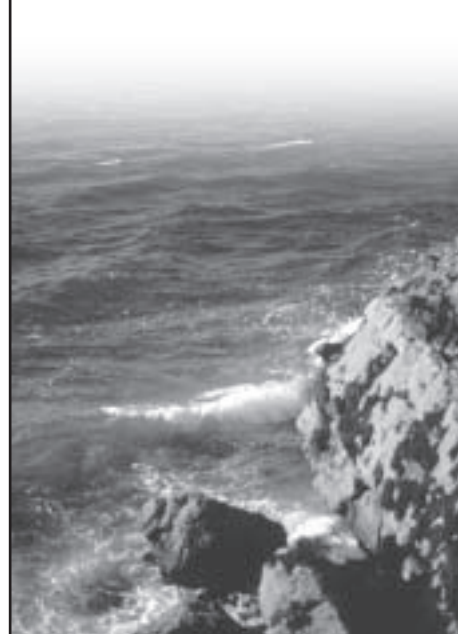
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View from the Water:

Reflections from the Gulf of Maine Expedition



Gulf of Maine Expedition members Natalie Springuel, Rich MacDonald, Sue Hutchins and Dan Earle paddled along the entire Gulf of Maine shoreline, recording observations and educating people about coastal issues and sustainable boating and camping practices.



Natalie Springuel, Gulf of Maine Expedition

Most Maine residents and visitors have a “driver’s eye” view of the coast. Far fewer people see it from the water or know how it compares to the coastlines of neighboring states and provinces. Now we can partake in that valuable offshore perspective through the accounts of Gulf of Maine Expedition (www.gomexpedition.org) members who spent nearly five months in 2002 recording their observations along 1,000 miles of shoreline. The Maine Coastal Program, Maine Sea Grant and Gulf of Maine Council were leading sponsors of the Expedition.

Expedition leader Natalie Springuel, an Extension Associate in Community Development with Maine Sea Grant, found the trip gave her a more immediate sense of how “the Gulf of Maine is wholly intertwined with the humans who inhabit it.” Increasing human use is posing new management challenges, particularly in such realms as tourism, resource extraction and development.

The dominant impression Springuel had in southern reaches of the Gulf (extending from Cape Cod Bay up to Portland) was of expensive shorefront homes and limited public access. The development pressures that have transformed many Southern Maine beach communities are moving eastward, Springuel reports. She was surprised by the amount of second home development occurring between Mount Desert Island and Cape Sable in Nova Scotia. What she saw convinced her of the need for prompt action: “Maine

is at the crux of needing to plan what the coast will look like in decades to come. We can’t afford to ignore the connection between tourism and development, since clearly a lot of tourists return to build summer homes here.”

Part of what drives both tourism and second home development in Maine, Springuel suspects, is that people in states to the south have lost opportunities close to home to experience beautiful and restorative coastal landscapes. It will take careful planning and management, she believes, for Maine to keep those experiences accessible for residents and visitors as population and development pressures increase.

“There needs to be more frank discussion,” Springuel says, “about what nature-based tourism is and where we want it to go. Maine has an opportunity to do far more than promote fun and scenery.” Springuel’s past work as a sea kayak trip leader has convinced her that nature-based tourism can give clients a

deeper understanding of natural and cultural history and transform their perspectives and priorities. Every trip, she says, is filled “with teachable moments.” The Gulf of Maine Expedition was no exception: Springuel is still busy sorting through the lessons learned offshore. Many of these insights may prove useful in her new role with Sea Grant—working with communities in Hancock and Washington counties to foster sustainable nature-based businesses.



Heather Sisk

Making Nature-based Tourism Sustainable

Looking at the Numbers

Maine Island Trail Association, Portland and Rockland (www.mita.org)

When the nonprofit Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) first formed 15 years ago, it sought members willing to help care for a network of public and private islands extending from Casco Bay to Machias. MITA soon had 200 volunteers contributing their time to monitor islands and perform routine cleanups. “We still maintain that focus on stewardship,” says Executive Director Karen Stimpson, “but our work goes far beyond that now because of greatly increased use on the islands.”

Between 1995 and 2000, use of Maine’s public islands grew by 40 percent. Recognizing that “sheer numbers can have a damaging impact,” Stimpson says, “we’re now looking at how to manage access so that conservation values are preserved.” MITA and the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands have hosted numerous “stakeholder” meetings to gather ideas from island users and owners on how best to manage increased visitation.

Input from those meetings led to voluntary guidelines that now set capacity limits for each public island based on its ecological constraints. “So far we’ve had breathtaking cooperation from stakeholders trying to divine the wisest way to guide care of these islands for the future,” Stimpson says. “We’re learning that people really want to do the right thing if you provide them with the right information.”

That information includes minimizing impacts by adopting a “leave no trace” ethic (see sidebar), and planning trips that rely more on mainland campsites and Bed & Breakfasts than island camping. “The message we’re sending now,” Stimpson says, “is that the privilege of using these islands comes with an awesome responsibility. If you do a good job taking care of these islands, this resource will last well into the future. If you don’t, it won’t.”

Increased island usage has made MITA’s work of education, monitoring and management far more costly and labor-intensive. “Up to now,” Stimpson says, “we’ve stewarded these islands for the good of the public as the management arm of the Bureau of Parks and Lands, but the costs are rapidly outpacing our resources and we’re needing to look at where the revenue for this work will come from in the future.”

“Leave No Trace” Guidelines:

- 1) Plan ahead and prepare (and keep group size small).
- 2) Travel and camp on durable surfaces (using established trails and campsites).
- 3) Dispose of waste properly.
- 4) Leave what you find.
- 5) Minimize campfire impacts: kindle no fires.
- 6) Respect wildlife.
- 7) Be considerate of others.

(For more information on “leave no trace” practices, consult the website of the national nonprofit organization, Leave No Trace, Inc., at www.lnt.org. The Maine Island Trail Association website, www.mita.org, also provides further guidance.)



Stacie Davidson

Being Part of the Solution

Hardy Boat Cruises, New Harbor (www.hardyboat.com)

Stacie and Al Crocetti operate Hardy Boat Cruises which offers ferry service to Monhegan Island and thematic cruises such as a Puffin Watch. Last spring, Hardy Boat was one of 16 businesses invited to join in a state-sponsored symposium on nature-based tourism. “We were honored to participate,” Stacie Crocetti says, “and welcomed the chance to share ideas with others.” She would like to see more state recognition for businesses that adopt sustainable practices because it helps build morale and motivation.

Hardy Boat works closely with the nonprofit Project Puffin and contributes to their bird research and restoration work. “Education’s a high priority for us,” Stacie Crocetti says. “All of our trips are narrated and we try to educate even the ferry passengers about island issues like water conservation and trash removal. If tourists all begin hearing the same environmental messages from business to business,” she speculates, “they might leave Maine at the end of their stay being a little more conservation-minded.”

The Crosettis have built their business consciously, wanting to “keep it small, keep it simple and earn enough to live modestly.” While some of their sustainable practices involve greater expense, they see these choices as an investment in the future. “Increasingly,” Stacie Crocetti says, “people may choose businesses like ours because we’re doing the right thing.” The State, she believes, could help this process by bringing together people who are in business already and creating policies to guide appropriate practices among nature-based businesses. Stacie says she hopes to join in this collaborative planning: “I feel totally obligated and responsible to be part of the solution.”

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

Maine Windjammer Association/J & E Riggins Schooner, Rockland (www.sailmainecoast.com)

The 14 tall ships in the Maine Windjammer Association carry approximately 9,000 visitors each year, bringing in revenues of more than \$7 million. Many of the fleet’s captains make an effort to keep those dollars in the community. “By making deliberate choices every step of the way,” says Anne Mahle who captains the *J & E Riggins* with her husband Jon Finger, “business owners can have a profound impact. As a business, you have more money to vote with.” Mahle and Finger commit to purchase produce from Agricola Farm in nearby Union, buying “shares” in a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program that supplies their boat with fresh produce throughout the season. Going this route, Mahle explains, “is a bit more expensive but we get so much back—quality food, an education for our guests, and what we want to see in the landscape—thriving farms rather than more parking lots.”

The *J & E Riggins* and many other windjammers are adopting other “green” practices as well. The schooner *American Eagle* has converted to using biodiesel fuel, a biodegradable fuel that generates 93 percent fewer hydrocarbons and no soot, sulfur or unpleasant diesel odor. Several ships now engage in composting and recycling, and most of the fleet goes one step beyond a “leave no trace” ethic—working actively to clean up the places they visit. Brenda Walker, Captain of the *Isaac Evans*, explains that “we’re all doing the best we can to be good stewards. The Coastal Cleanup is not a once-annual event for us: it’s something we do on every trip.” She notes that responsible practices are particularly important for the windjammers because they’re so visible.

Schooner guests learn that conservation need not imply deprivation. They travel by wind power and “use very little electricity and water,” Mahle observes, “yet they still have a very enriching experience!” Clearly the guests like what they’re learning: the *J & E Riggins*’ repeat business now stands at 60 percent.



Bryan Kearns

What’s Involved in Sustainable Tourism?

Sustainability involves meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations. While there is no single, consistent definition of sustainable tourism, certain elements define many of the “best practices” in this area:

- ♻️ Conserving water, energy and other natural resources;
- ♻️ Using sustainable means of transportation;
- ♻️ Recycling and reducing waste;
- ♻️ Respecting local communities;
- ♻️ Promoting greater awareness of local culture and natural history;
- ♻️ Performing environmental service work; and
- ♻️ Contributing to local causes.

Nature-based Tourism *(continued from first page)*

strated the potential power of this approach—particularly when everyone is brought into the decision-making process from the outset (see the Maine Island Trail story on page 4).

Other regions have adopted systems of accreditation, developed by industry representatives, to motivate a change in business practices and to better inform tourists about which establishments meet certain sustainability criteria. Still others embrace the “Global Code of Ethics for Tourism,” a resolution adopted in 1999 by the World Tourism Organization, a nonprofit alliance of industry leaders. This ethical code underscores the need for tourism to foster respect and tolerance among peoples, be done “in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions,” and “safeguard the natural environment.” “Adhering to voluntary principles like these,” notes Michael Montagna, an economist at the Maine State Planning Office, “could help raise the profile of Maine’s tourism sector and attract visitors for longer stays—thereby providing great economic benefits. There’s a growing number of sophisticated consumers around the world who want to visit places that emphasize sustainable tourism,” Montagna continues, “so if we cultivate a strong industry-wide reputation in this area we would draw on a tremendous existing market of people who fit with our vision for Maine.”

Already many individuals and groups along Maine’s coast are striving to honor principles of sustainability in their day-to-day business operations. As the case studies in this newsletter illustrate, innkeepers, boat captains, outfitters and countless others are working hard to adopt new approaches to business and marketing; educate visitors and engage them in environmental stewardship; and protect the natural resources on which their livelihoods depend.

To become an international leader in sustainable nature-based tourism, Maine will need to invest in its industry and draw on the time and talents of government and industry representatives as well as individual business owners. That prospect doesn’t deter advocates like Nat Bowditch who sees “plenty of people willing to roll up their sleeves and get into it.” The move toward greater sustainability could bring untold benefits to Maine, Montagna affirms: “we’re not losing the old but gaining a better quality of new.”

Gulf of Maine Council Collaborates with the Bay of Fundy Sustainable Tourism Program

As part of its commitment to fostering sustainable maritime activities, the Gulf of Maine Council wants to help create a nature-based tourism strategy among the states and provinces that border the Gulf. It recently joined forces with the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership, which promotes that portion of the Gulf as an internationally recognized destination for high-quality, sustainable tourism. The two alliances are working collaboratively to plan a Sustainable Tourism Conference (to be held in Fall 2003) that will assess both the capacity and market demand for sustainable tourism around the Gulf; identify the region’s unique environment and habitat issues; and begin shaping ethical guidelines for sustainable tourism. For more information, contact Tom Young at the Bay of Fundy Tourism Partnership (ph: 902-254-2772; tom@bayoffundytourism.com) or Theresa Torrent-Ellis at the Maine Coastal Program.

Resources on Sustainable Tourism Practices:

- ✓ *Governor’s Conference on Tourism*: Wednesday February 12, Augusta Civic Center. For more information, contact the Maine Office of Tourism at 287-5711 or mark.turek@state.me.us.
- ✓ *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*: www.world-tourism.org/projects/ethics/principles
- ✓ *International Year of Ecotourism/World Ecotourism Summit*: <http://www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism/ecotourism/iey.htm>
- ✓ *Green Seal’s Program for “Greening the Lodging Industry”*: <http://www.greenseal.org/greeninglodge.htm>
Green Seal, an independent nonprofit organization, is working in partnership with the lodging industry to introduce more environmentally sound practices. They have developed a comprehensive purchasing and operations guide, *Greening Your Property*, that can be purchased through the Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Lodging Association.
- ✓ *Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility*: www.mebsr.org
This nonprofit association is committed to “creating a new business climate that recognizes that long-term, sustainable profitability is directly linked to acting in a socially responsible, ethical and compassionate manner. Members pledge to take steps to lessen the environmental impact of their businesses, treat their employees with increasing respect and fairness and give back to the community.” Their website lists several hundred “best practices” in which their members engage.

Calais Land Acquisition Enhances International Waterway

Devil's Head, a prominent headland on the St Croix River estuary, will soon be conserved in its entirety thanks to the efforts of the St Croix International Waterway Commission, the City of Calais, the Maine Department of Conservation, and the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program. "The Maine Coastal Program made a critical contribution to this effort by providing \$30,000 of the matching funds needed to obtain the LMF grant," says Lee Sochasky, Executive Director of the Waterway Commission. This ambitious project will preserve the natural character of highest headland in Downeast Maine and will support the area's nature-based tourism initiatives. The 315-acre site has a mile of coastal shore frontage and 3,550 feet of frontage along U.S. Route 1. In the coming year, access will be developed to the shore and to the peak so that visitors can view 40 miles of international coastline (which includes St. Croix Island, the site of the first French colony in North America). Outdoor interpretation and education projects will follow.

A collaborative conservation effort has succeeded in protecting Devil's Head (right foreground), a bold headland overlooking the St. Croix River Estuary.



Have you taken the Watershed Pledge yet? To learn more about what you can do to protect water quality, request a copy of the new Maine Coastal Watersheds Pledge Book. We encourage you to sign and return a Watershed Pledge card to the Coastal Program by December 31, 2002. In return, you'll receive a watershed tile, become eligible for a raffle, and have the satisfaction of knowing that you're helping to protect Maine's coastal waters. For more information contact Theresa Torrent-Ellis or Todd Janeski at the Maine Coastal Program.

New International Stewards Program Launched in Calais

The Maine Coastal Program, in partnership with the St. Croix Estuary Project (SCEP), ran its first international stewards course this fall, inspiring local citizens on both sides of the border to engage in estuarine remediation projects. "We organized this course as part of River Revival 2002," explains Art MacKay of the St. Croix Estuary Project. "The model that the Coastal Program has used in other regions—like Penobscot Bay and the Midcoast—seemed like an effective one for educating area residents here about the estuary's natural and cultural history, sources of pollution, and ways to improve its health." Twenty community members attended the month-long course, devoting two days each week to classroom studies and field excursions around the estuary. Each course participant commits to spending at least 30 hours of volunteer service with a local organization, working on behalf of the estuary. For more information on the newest Stewards program, contact artmackay@scep.org (www.scep.org) or Theresa Torrent-Ellis at the Maine Coastal Program.



Wells NERR Presents Exhibits

In celebration of National Estuary Day, October 5, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve dedicated several new interactive exhibits, "Windows on the World of Coastal Science," that the Maine Coastal Program helped to fund. Coastal Program Director Kathleen Leyden joined Doug Brown, Acting Director of NOAA's Office of Coastal Resources Management, and Wells Reserve staff in addressing those gathered for the exhibit opening. The exhibits reinforce the Reserve's threefold mission of research, education and stewardship.

Staff News



Kristine Kimball is the Coastal Program's newest Americorps member, acting as a Stewards leader and a watershed educator—assisting staff members Theresa Torrent-Ellis and Todd Janeski. An Iowa native, Kristine is now immersed in coastal issues, making up-in her words—"for all those years spent as a land-locked flatlander!" She has worked on land-use issues in the Androscoggin River valley and served on the Lewiston-Auburn Planning Board.

Jim Connors has joined the Maine Coastal Program to work on public access and working waterfronts. He also assists the Land for Maine's Future Program on projects that lie within the coastal zone. In the next issue of *Maine Coastline*, you'll read more about a report that Jim is preparing for the Maine Legislature which assesses how the State is meeting its policy goals for public access and working waterfronts. Jim brings a strong background in natural resource planning to his new role, having worked for years on energy issues at the State Planning Office (particularly the development of an electric energy conservation program that will be put in place by the Public Utilities Commission).



Representing the Maine Coastal Program in a partnership of state, federal and nonprofit organizations, senior planner **Liz Hertz** received a 2002 Teamwork Award from the Governor for the successful launch of *Beginning with Habitat*. This collaborative effort is designed to provide local communities with comprehensive information about plant and wildlife habitat to help them in conserving Maine's natural heritage. By merging data sets, the project partners were able to provide current information (digitally and on printed maps) on riparian areas, large undeveloped tracts, and important habitats to land trusts, planning boards, watershed groups and other interested parties. Eventually much of this data will be available on CD and on-line to aid local communities in comprehensive planning, land conservation and watershed protection. For more information on *Beginning with Habitat*, e-mail Elizabeth.Hertz@state.me.us or call 287-8935.



Jon Kachmar, the new Habitat Restoration Coordinator, comes to the Coastal Program from the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission where he worked as a coastal resources planner. Jon is working to help communities reestablish salt marshes, remove or modify dams, restore riverine and stream systems and improve monitoring of restoration projects. Jon also staffs the Gulf of Maine Council's Habitat Restoration and Protection Committee, which brings together representatives of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The Council is working in partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service (at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) to sponsor extensive local habitat restoration work over the next three years.



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The Maine Coastal Program represents a partnership of local, regional and state agencies that work collaboratively to enhance management of the state's diverse coastal resources. Housed at the State Planning Office, Coastal Program staff work extensively with governmental agencies and community organizations such as local land trusts and regional economic development groups. Planning and outreach focus on such issues as watershed management, development issues, fisheries management, water quality monitoring, marine education, citizen stewardship, coastal hazards, marine infrastructure and habitat protection.

For more information on the Maine Coastal Program, please visit our website at www.maineoceanalprogram.org